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ABSTRACT

The net effect of the early experiences of writing "compositions" which involved either describing the circumstances of a student's life or recounting the kinds of events encapsulated in that proverbially hack title, "What I Did on My Summer Vacation," has been a tendency for older teachers to devalue nonfiction as an object of serious and sustained literary study. The focus of this paper, however, is not on student-centered writing "per se," nor on the value (educational, therapeutic, or otherwise) of involving students in such writing. Rather, the paper wishes to make a case, based on current cultural directions and on historical precedent, for "creative nonfiction" (which has become a favored term embracing the personal essay mode) having a place alongside the more established "literary" forms--novels, poems, plays--within the English curriculum. At the same time, it wishes to suggest that the inclusion of creative nonfiction as a site of literary study can revitalize the discipline itself by expanding understanding of that elusive category "Literature," and thus opening up further possibilities for work within that field. According to the paper, creative nonfiction has become a major growth area in late 20th/early 21st century writing, as witnessed by the proliferation of outlets in print and online for informed personal opinion pieces. It traces the genre's pedigree and considers what some scholars have written about the genre. It also discusses the work of several early writers of creative nonfiction, including Leigh Hunt and E.B. White. (Contains 13 notes and 24 references.) (NKA)

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Creative Nonfiction in the Classroom: Extending the Boundaries of Literary Study

A paper presented to the Conference of the International Federation of Teachers of English, Melbourne, 5-8 July 2003

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Towards the conclusion of Tony Parker's *A Man of Good Abilities* - itself a superb example of creative nonfiction writing - Norman, the sixty-five-year-old subject of the book, ponders his own efforts to record his life in diary form:

> *Thursday*. A wet, miserable sort of day all day, leaving me at the end of it in a matching sort of mood, sitting at the table and staring at the wall and wishing some great flash of inspiration would light up what can only be a very dreary account of 'My Day'. (That's rather like the essays we used to write at school, but it was usually supposed to have been written by a penny or shilling. Do they still inflict such dreadful chores on children, I wonder?) (Parker 1967: 194)

Certainly in my primary school years in the early to mid-1960s teachers still did, except that these 'chores' were called 'compositions', and involved either describing the circumstances of one's life - home, pets, members of the family - or recounting the kinds of events encapsulated in that proverbially hack title, 'What I Did in My Summer Vacation'. I remember approaching these tasks with resignation rather than any real pleasure at the opportunity to write about my life. Keen reader and competent writer that I was, for me 'compositions' seemed little more than tedious hoops to jump through in order to get closer to what even then I regarded as the 'real' subject of English at school: the reading and writing of fiction.

The net effect of such early experiences, I believe, has been a tendency in teachers around my age (who currently make up the bulk of the profession at secondary and tertiary levels in Australia) to devalue nonfiction as an object of serious and sustained literary study. A cynical assessment of these composition exercises - let's for the time being call them personal essays - might be to dismiss them as delaying strategies employed by overworked teachers momentarily at the end of their pedagogical tether. A more generous (not to say condescending)

assessment might be to concede that they represent genuine - if largely untheorised and even unconscious - attempts to have students follow in the footsteps of the 'patron saint' of the personal essay, Michel de Montaigne, who justified his own writing 'in the famous formula "What do I know?"' (Frame 1965: 162).[1] The process of explicitly writing ourselves into the world, as it were, through the personal essay may even lead us to share in those two important preoccupations informing postmodernist critical theory: that knowledge is constructed through language, and that by using language we find and establish our subjectivity in the world.

However, the focus of this paper is not on student-centred writing *per se*, nor on the value - educational, therapeutic, or otherwise - of involving students in such writing. Rather, I simply wish to make a case, based on current cultural directions and on historical precedent, for 'creative nonfiction' (which, as will be seen, has become a favoured term embracing the personal essay mode) having a place alongside the more established 'literary' forms - novels, poems, plays - within the English curriculum.[2] At the same time, I wish to suggest that the inclusion of creative nonfiction as a site of literary study can revitalise the discipline itself by expanding our understanding of that elusive category 'literature', and thus opening up further possibilities for our work within the field.

Creative nonfiction has become a major growth area in late 20th / early 21st century writing, as witnessed by the proliferation of outlets in print and online for informed (and otherwise) personal opinion pieces. It has a long pedigree, of course, stretching back through the essay mode of Montaigne, Bacon and others and beyond to classical Greek and Roman authors, while the corpus of many a renowned novelist, past and present, includes significant amounts of nonfiction in

the form of reviews, social commentaries, auto/biographies, and so on. Australian author Drusilla Modjeska, in just such a recent piece,[3] argues that nonfiction has actually supplanted fiction as the dominant literary mode of the postmodern era, and particularly among the book-buying public in Australia. While acknowledging the harder-nosed rationales that 'it's easier for publicity departments to find an angle' in works of 'biography, history, memoir' than in most recent novels, and that '[t]he rise of non-fiction is also sometimes put down to an information-heavy culture wanting facts with its books', she maintains that '[i]n this time of moral and political confusion, non-fiction is more likely to have something to say that readers want to hear':

> As fiction turned its face elsewhere, detaching itself more and more from local realities and local experience, there was a space wanting, an opening. It was filled by writing that wasn't fiction. As if in response to distress, there was a return to the narrative of lives and the sort of exploration of experience that could make sense of - or even just raise - some of the questions of identity and responsibility that were coming back to vex us after two decades of being dismantled and reconfigured on terms we had thought were ours. (Modjeska 2002: 9)

Modjeska singles out memoir and biography in particular as morphing into 'a new genre' called 'life writing' (2002: 9), but also makes the more general assertion that in terms of story-telling techniques, the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction are dissolving. While Modjeska doesn't use the term, the recognition by writers, editors and critics of this blurring of distinctions has seen the essay in its postmodernist manifestations increasingly re-labelled as 'creative nonfiction' (e.g. Root and Steinberg 1999; Gutkind (1993); Brien 2001).[4]

From the various attempts by commentators to define creative nonfiction we can begin to discern its constituent 'literariness'. Michael Steinberg takes

pains to highlight its personal expressive quality as a distinguishing feature:

> Where the feature article, first-person column, or work of investigative journalism are centred in subject matter or topic, literary or 'creative' nonfiction is centred primarily in the writers' thoughts, feelings and reflections. To elaborate, I see creative nonfiction as a spectrum that encompasses the personal essay, literary journalism, and the personal critical essay. (Brien 2001)

In tracing its history via the so-called 'new' journalism, Lee Gutkind, editor of the eponymous journal *Creative Nonfiction*, points to some of the 'literary' devices that have become both available and acceptable to its current practitioners and readers:

> In the 1960s and 1970s, Talese, Wolfe and many others, including novelists Norman Mailer and Truman Capote, shattered the sacrosanct bonds of feature writing by adapting fictional techniques. They captured subjects in scenes, used dialogue, embellished with intimate and substantial description, and included an inner point of view (life through the eyes of the character about whom you are writing), thus adding the 'creative' element to what was once an impersonal process. (Gutkind 1993)

Ian Jack, editor of *Granta*, appears not to have adopted the term - he speaks of 'a certain kind of non-fiction - let's call it narrative non-fiction' (Webster 2002)[5] - but nevertheless very helpfully expands on Gutkind's historicising:

> The real development came when writers imported many devices of the novel into non-fictional areas such as travel and autobiography. That has been going on for a very long time, though not to the same extent as today. Its recent, celebrated and influential exponents include Paul Theroux, Norman Lewis and the late Bruce Chatwin. You might also include Frank McCourt. (Webster 2002)

As if picking up on Jack's observations, Steinberg comments: 'Clearly the genre is finally getting its due right now - witness the fact that literary memoirs like *Angela's Ashes* and *The Liar's Club* were at the top of the bestseller list for many, many months' (Brien 2001). Steinberg's remark forces us to confront two

fundamental questions regarding creative nonfiction's place within an English curriculum: is it 'literary' enough to warrant inclusion alongside more canonical works within the English syllabus; and is it merely 'a passing fad', as Steinberg acknowledges 'critics of the form' have maintained (Brien 2001)?

Perceiving in creative nonfiction an inherent capacity to 'bind together the three disparate strands ... : literature, creative writing, and composition' that constitute the grab-bag subject we call English, Root and Steinberg (1999: xv) class creative nonfiction as 'the fourth genre', thus recognising its fitness for inclusion alongside poetry, fiction and drama as 'literature'. But if the developments in literary criticism over the last decade or two have taught us anything, it is that 'literature' itself is a problematic term. In particular, the influence of Cultural Studies on English has raised our awareness of literature as more of a cultural and ideological construct than an empirically classifiable species of writing.[6] But a closer examination reveals that trying to pin down the modes and genres of writing that constitute 'literature' has always been problematic, especially when it involves any attempt to privilege fiction over nonfiction.[7] As Carter and Nash (1990) warn, any 'essentialist opposition between literary and non-literary' fails to explain, for example,

> the 'literary' status of certain travel writing, or Orwell's essays on the Spanish Civil War ...; nor does it explain how Thomas K[e]nneally's *Schindler's Ark*, a piece of non-fiction, a 'novel' based on documentary research into real events and characters ..., won the Booker Prize for 'Literature' in 1982; ... nor why the prose works of Milton or Donne, which are non-fictional, are literary. (1990: 34)

Rob Pope drives the point home even further in this exercise he sets his student readers:

> try visiting the 'Fiction' and 'Non-fiction' sections of a general bookstore or public library. Open a book from each section at random and try to make a case for it being in the other section. (1998: 220)

Clearly, then, the literary/non-literary binary opposition is closely bound up with that of fiction/nonfiction; in demonstrating to us the arbitrariness of the literary/non-literary divide, Pope's exercise also points to a redrawn map of *terra literaria*, in which there exists plenty of space for the inclusion of works of nonfiction.

The postmodern problematisation and interrogation of literature as a special class of texts shifts the focus instead towards the 'textuality' of texts - that is, their linguistic characteristics - such that critical attention is directed at their 'literariness' rather than whether or not they fall squarely into field of 'literature'. Carter and Nash (1990), among others, show how readily the tropes and devices associated with canonical literary works might be identified in texts either conventionally located outside the canon, or which defy categorisation under the generic labels of poetry, fiction or drama. Their premise is

> that the notion of literary language as a yes/no category should be replaced by one which sees literary language as a continuum, a cline of literariness in language use with some uses of language being marked as more literary than others. (1990: 34)

The net effect of this focus on the 'micro' aspects of language rather than on the 'macro' notion of genre is not the annihilation of the boundary between the literary and the non-literary, but rather, as the subtitle of this paper suggests, a redefinition of the *subject* of literary study.

In their own exploration of how degrees of literariness might better be understood, Carter and Nash employ two sets of texts, one dealing with writing about a place, the other with writing about cars. In each set only one text, an

extract from a novel in each case, interpellates us - to use the literary-critical adaptation of Althusser's term for the way ideologies 'hail' us as subjects operating within particular discourses (Hawthorn 2000: 177-78) - such that we read it 'in a literary way, as a literary text' (Carter and Nash 1990: 35). Nevertheless Carter and Nash demonstrate convincingly not only that 'literary language is not special or different in that any formal feature termed "literary" can be found in other discourses' (1990: 58), but that, more significantly for the classroom teacher concerned about the dilution or even pollution of the field through the more inclusive approach of literary practice:

> Far from demeaning 'literature' and reducing appreciation of literary language use, examination of literariness in language leads to greater respect for the richness of 'ordinary' language in all its multiple contexts. (Carter and Nash 1990: 59)[8]

Even so, there may be those still worried that English at the upper levels of secondary or within tertiary education should not be about 'ordinary' language, or that engaging their students with non-canonical texts may leave them open to those by now commonplace attacks against postmodernist analysis, of the 'It treats Shakespeare at the same level as shampoo advertising' variety. I want to avoid that kind of criticism by taking as my exemplars two nonfiction pieces that could hardly be regarded as modish, transitory or, if we adopt Chris Anderson's distinctions, purely informational or journalistic (1989: ix), yet which, by virtue of their generic 'slipperiness', would still have considerable trouble finding a place in the conventional English syllabus. These two pieces, and literally thousands like them, provide not only fruitful material for analysis in themselves, but also hint at how much richer - not to mention how much more congruent with actual literary practice, past and present - our syllabuses might be which include nonfiction that has what Anderson calls 'some kind of intrinsic value exceeding its value as

information, some value as language' (1989: ix).

The life and work of Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) in many ways exemplify the place occupied by creative nonfiction in relation to the conventionally 'high' literary genres of poetry, fiction and drama. Friend and mentor to some of the most celebrated English Romantic poets - it was while sailing back from a visit to Hunt and Byron in Livorno in 1822 that Percy Shelley drowned - Hunt wrote poetry and drama, but is best known for founding a number of literary journals and for his prolific output of essays with which he helped to fill those journals (*Oxford Companion* 1985: 484-85). In the June 28, 1820 issue of his journal *The Indicator*,[9] there appeared Hunt's short prose piece with the odd title, 'A "Now." Descriptive of a Hot Day'. It takes only a few lines' reading to realise that his attempt to encapsulate the early hours of a hot day in rural England is anything but a variation on 'What I Did in My Summer Vacation', and is instead a virtuosic piece of writing that invites us to employ the same critical devices we might bring to bear on the most intricate work of 'literary' fiction.

Like Shakespeare's Richard III, who uses it to soliloquise about another sun and to 'descant' on his 'own deformity' (1964: I.i.1-27), Hunt employs 'this very useful and ready monosyllable - "Now"' (Hunt 1840: 7) as the opening gambit in his own monologue about a summer morning. But whereas Richard uses 'now' only three times, for Hunt it is 'this "eternal Now"' (1840: 8), to be evoked and repeated over and over like a mantra or spell capable of capturing vast tracts of space within a very short timeframe. For with the rise of a Homeric dawn - 'Now the rosy- (and lazy-) fingered Aurora, issuing from her saffron house' (1840: 7) - Hunt's narrator, like the sun, Phoebus, who 'looks everything out of the sky' (1840: 7), has the ability to take in the whole world simultaneously, from a single

point of view. A written text is not an instantaneous utterance, however; it must be imparted and read in some progressive (if not necessarily 'linear') fashion. Therefore 'A "Now"'s narrative perspective must shift from Phoebus's to something more akin to that of Menippus, whom the satirist Lucian flies above his world to observe and comment on its foibles (Lucian 1961). With each 'now' we are introduced to a different aspect of village life:

> Now cattle stand in water, and ducks are envied. Now boots, and shoes, and trees by the road-side, are thick with dust; and dogs, rolling in it, after issuing out of the water, into which they have been thrown to fetch sticks, come scattering horror among the legs of the spectators. Now a fellow who finds he has three miles further to go in a pair of tight shoes, is in a pretty situation. Now rooms with the sun upon them become intolerable ... (Hunt 1840: 7)

In contrast to the languidness and indolence brought on by the increasing heat of the summer's day, we are carried through the village faster than the flight of gnats by which we are told 'delicate skins are beset' (1840: 7). Time is passing, but space is being traversed at a much faster rate. If we were to ask our students for carefully considered comparisons, we might hear that Hunt's narrative has cinematic qualities. The film buffs among them might remind us of the opening tracking shot in Orson Welles' *Touch of Evil* (1958), which takes us through a Mexican border town in a single continuous motion lasting many minutes.[10] But even this is inadequate to comprehend the speed at which Hunt conveys us on his journey. The younger students may get closer to the mark in comparing it to music video-clips that use devices such as fast-motion or 'time-lapse' or any of those other means for compressing time or unfolding space at hyper-realistic speeds. In fact, the closest cinematic analogy to Hunt's method for me is just such a music video-clip depicting the flight of (apparently) a tiny alien spacecraft from

its point of view as it races through a small town, able to pass through buildings and human bodies.[11] And as in that video-clip, the action comes to an abrupt halt, in Hunt's case amusingly with the author himself appearing in the picture, as it were, who, having 'a plate of strawberries brought before him, finds that he has come to the end of his writing' (Hunt 1840: 7).[12]

Hunt's piece is an exercise in seeing how much mileage (literally!) may be made out of a set of impressions and observations built around '"Now" ... that masterly conjunction' (1840: 7). The device gives rise to a poetic and ludic quality we associate with the deliberate artifice of supposedly 'literary' language (including the punning of 'old ladies, with their lappets unpinned, walk along in a state of dilapidation' (Hunt 1840: 7)), but the cumulative effect of all these 'now' images is that we begin, perhaps unconsciously at first, to doubt that this is a monosemic work, written 'with the need to convey clear, retrievable and unambiguous information' (Carter and Nash 1990: 41), and to seek out instead the polysemy of the text. That is, we begin to wonder whether this is simply a series of word pictures of village life, and to suspect that it is meant to connote something more than the sum of its parts (as in the sense that in spite of all of the jobs and work-people conjured up, very little if any actual work is getting done).

At the same time there is a strongly intertextual, allusive strain in the essay, consistent with T. S. Eliot's 'feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and with it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence' in the work (1962: 294). If in Eliot's terms 'we *know* so much more' than the dead writers, because 'they are that which we know' (1962: 296), then we can detect in Hunt's text not only the Shakespearean rhetoric of Richard III's opening soliloquy, but also Dickens' creation thirty years later of the

well-known 'fog-scape' opening to *Bleak House* (1853). Here the fog is the medium by which we are led through dismal scenes of London until at last we arrive at the High Court of Chancery: 'On such an afternoon, if ever, the Lord High Chancellor ought to be sitting here - as here he is - with a foggy glory round his head' (Dickens 1953: 16). Hunt, rather, leads us directly to the presence of the author himself, a metafictional technique we are familiar with today in novels such as John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), but which in Hunt's time was a whimsical device derived from the diary or journal entry, and which principally affirms the work's nonfictional basis, grounding it in the 'real world' of his own direct experience.

The self and direct experience are certainly the basis of the second piece, American writer E. B. White's 'About Myself'. White (1899-1985) is probably better known today for his children's novels *Stuart Little* (1945) and *Charlotte's Web* (1952), but a considerable amount of his writing consisted of essays and articles on a wide range of social issues for journals such as *The New Yorker* and *Harper's*. Certainly it's quite common to find in anthologies of 'classic' American nonfiction at least one sample of White the essayist variously playing the role of, in his own words, 'philosopher, scold, jester, raconteur, confidant, devil's advocate, enthusiast' (quoted in Root and Steinberg 1999: 1). The example chosen by John Gross for inclusion in *The Oxford Book of Essays* (1991) represents a far cry from the folksy chattiness, dry wit or razor-sharp satire of the Thurber, Mencken or Parker mould of American essay-writing, however, or indeed of White's own usual style, and merits close attention for - to use Carter and Nash's term (1990: 38-39) - its 're-registration' of the technocratic discourse of bureaucracy 'for particularly subtle literary purposes' (1990: 39).

In June 1944, at the height of America's involvement in the Second World War, White wrote to Harold Ross, editor of *The New Yorker*, requesting that Ross sign a particular official form 'in the role of my employer'. Playfully, White promised Ross that if the form were returned promptly,

> as a reward I will try to write you a casual called 'About Myself,' beginning 'I am a man of medium height.' The piece would then go on to tell other things about me, taken directly from forms such as the enclosed. It would make a fascinating record. (*Letters* 1976: 253)

White was as good as his word. The 'casual', as he called it, was written and duly published in the February 10, 1945 issue of *The New Yorker* (*Letters* 1976: 253-54, note 1), and indeed makes for fascinating reading and analysis.

Following the essay's promised beginning, White builds a picture of himself rather like one of those Renaissance 'Mannerist' paintings by Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527-1593) of human faces constructed from fruit and vegetables or other flora or still life objects, except that this self-portrait consists almost entirely of government classifications, serial numbers or codes, which sort and regulate either himself and his family, or the goods and services they use or are subject to:

> My Selective Service order number is 10789. The serial number is T1654. I am in Class IV-A, and have been variously in Class 3-A, Class I-A (H), and Class 4-H. My social security number is 067-01-9841. I am married to US Woman Number 067-01-9807. Her eyes are gray. This is not a joint declaration, nor is it made by an agent; therefore it need be signed only by me - and, as I said, I am a man of medium height. (White 1991: 486)

Written a few years before the publication of Orwell's *1984* (1949), and decades before the appearance of George Lucas's debut film *THX 1138* (1971), White's essay evokes the depersonalised expressionist dystopias of Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1926) and Karel Čapek's robot play *RUR* (1923), perhaps via Hugo Gernsback's novel *Ralph 124C 41+* (1925).[13]

White's treatment of the theme is not all dark, however, nor is his method relentlessly uniform. Wry humour creeps in at strategic points to break the stream of serial numbers and 'bureaucratese', particularly when reminding readers of simpler times:

> My father was a man of medium height. His telephone number was 484. My mother was a housewife. Her eyes were blue. Neither parent had a social security number and neither was secure socially. They drove to the depot behind an unnumbered horse. (1991: 487)

Nevertheless even these asides are delivered in a terse, monotone style in keeping with a perception of the increasing anomie of the citizen/consumer/tax-payer on the cusp of the modernist and postmodernist eras. Nor does White ultimately negotiate the labyrinth of taxonomies out of which the narrator is constructed to discover an individual lying at the core of it all, as might be expected in so humanistic a writer. For while the narrator is unmistakably a personal 'I' throughout the essay, and struggles to assert an identity - principally through the slightly pathetic reiteration of his 'medium height' - the 'One' with which the piece concludes has nothing to do with, and holds out little hope for, the triumph of individualism:

> In 1918 I was a private in the Army. My number was 4,345,016. I was a boy of medium height. I had light hair. I had no absences of duty under GO 31, 1912, or GO 45, 1914. The number of that war was Number One. (1991: 488)

These works by Hunt and White - dead white males both - have been deliberately chosen for this discussion over more contemporary creative nonfiction partly for their 'reassurance' value: both are well-established literary figures, the inclusion of whom in an English syllabus would require little justification; but primarily as a demonstration that 'literature' has perhaps never just been about fiction (or poetry or drama). Hunt shows us how to turn writing about place into

writing prose 'poetically'; his stimulus is a single word which develops an imaginative vision involving compressed time and expanded space. White offers an approach to life-writing through an ostensibly simple act of re-registration, which reveals insights into the elaborate nexus between self and society, and which raises complex issues of culture, subjectivity and agency. The use of works such as these, and of creative nonfiction generally in the English classroom, both as sites for textual analysis and as stimuli for student writing, has the potential to revitalise our study of literature, and to help us develop a curriculum more in tune with a long tradition of real-world literary practice.

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[1] Montaigne's 'motto' is a deeply ambiguous one, however, as Frame reveals (1965: 162-80), reflecting a deep-seated doubt and scepticism towards the accepted wisdom of his time.

[2] For a sense of other directions the discussion of the significance of student-centred 'composition' might take, see for example the recent substantially theorised paper by Kumamoto (2002), and particularly the Works Cited therein.

[3] My thanks to postgraduate student Kari Adams for drawing my attention to the Modjeska article.

[4] As the label 'literary nonfiction' - sometimes also applied to this mode of writing (for example, Anderson 1989) - has, I suggest, no more helped to further its place within mainstream literary study than any other name, I prefer the more recent and rather less problematic term 'creative nonfiction'.

[5] Britisher Ian Jack's ignorance of, or unwillingness to use, the term 'creative nonfiction' is a pointer towards its American origin. Gutkind maintains that it 'was first popularly used as an umbrella to describe this genre in the application form for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Creative Writing Fellowship, ... to distinguish between the traditional journalism, and the personal essay' (1993), but does not provide the relevant date. Similarly, there is an Anglo-Australian tendency to hyphenate the term as 'non-fiction', as if unconsciously defining the genre by what it is *not*, and by implication still privileging the category 'fiction'.

[6] See, for example, Carter and Nash's comment about 'the much debated area' of literature existing 'ideologically ... by courtesy of communities of socio-culturally and sociolinguistically situated readers with common interests', which Barthes reduces to the bald statement, 'Literature is what gets taught' (Carter and Nash 1990: 60, note 7).

[7] Rob Pope notes that 'in twentieth-century high-street bookstores and local libraries the most fundamental division is that between 'Fiction' and '*Non*-fiction' ... This is presumably because in these contexts it is fiction which is the most sought-after and numerous category, so *that* becomes the privileged term. 'Non-fiction' is its merely shadowy inversion ...' (1998: 218). If the

observations of Modjeska and others are correct, that privileging may undergo a reversal in twenty-first-century bookstores and libraries.

[8] Carter and Nash also make a number of conclusions that take in the ideological positioning of both text and reader within specific social and cultural contexts (1990: 59). While I acknowledge these as crucial determinants in considering the literariness of texts, for the purposes of the current discussion they have to 'remain on the backburner', as the saying goes.

[9] Published 1819-21: 'It was non-political and entirely devoted to literary matters. Hunt and his friends, notably Hazlitt and Lamb, thought it Hunt's happiest venture in periodical publishing. It published the work of young poets, including Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci", and introduced much foreign literature. Although short-lived, it sold well' (*Oxford companion* 1985: 494). Hazlitt and Lamb were both, of course, major essayists themselves, especially in the field of literary criticism.

[10] One critic goes so far as to call this 'the most brilliant establishing shot in film history - a shot that establishes not only place and main characters in its continuous movement over several city blocks, but also the film's theme (crossing boundaries)' (Kehr 2003).

[11] I'm afraid I can't identify either the song or the artist concerned, being too interested in the visuals to have taken notice! However, our postgraduate students Kari Adams and Terry Glouftsis have suggested that it may be the clip to Placebo's song 'Special K'. I'm grateful for their help in this matter.

[12] While Hunt's essay appears in some anthologies as though it ends at this point, for example in Barnes (1951) and Symons (1887), the original continues for almost as long again with a discourse on 'Now' and a scene from Beaumont and Fletcher's play *The Woman-Hater* to illustrate his wittily self-deprecating point about how very much may be made out of very little. Perhaps if Hunt had been writing for another editor besides himself, he may have received some advice about over-writing.

[13] This is not to suggest that White was familiar with these earlier texts, but that his piece emerges out of already well-established concerns about the future. Gernsback, by the way, is memorialised in the name usually given to the Science Fiction Achievement Award instituted in 1953, the Hugo (Clute 1995: 68 and 119).

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